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YADLIN, *AN ARROGANT OPPRESSIVE SPIRIT**

Since the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979, the media of Egypt have come under close scrutiny for their treatment of Jewish and Israeli themes. Prior to Sadat's peace initiative, Egyptian publishing houses produced reams of literature that was plainly anti-Semitic, much of it under official and semiofficial auspices. Some of the material was mined by Y. Harkabi for his *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, published in English in 1972. In Harkabi's work it became clear just how widespread many anti-Semitic themes had become in the writings of Arab publicists—from belief in the veracity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, to the credibility given to the blood libel accusation. The bulk of Harkabi's materials were published in Egypt.

Now Rivka Yadlin, a Research Fellow at the Hebrew University, has demonstrated the persistence of this "textual anti-Semitism" in Egypt of the 1980's—an Egypt at peace with Israel. With Harkabi-like diligence, she has worked her way through a substantial corpus of Arabic printed sources to produce a litany of quotations and paraphrases that repeat many known anti-Semitic canards and coin nearly as many new ones. Not only are the *Protocols* given credence at every turn; so also are the basest characterizations of the Jews, on whose doorstep no charge cannot be laid. As Yadlin's subtitle indicates, these materials make little or no effort to distinguish between anti-Judaism and anti-Zionism; the arguments mobilized against the existence of the State of Israel are almost always arguments against the anticivilizing role of the Jews. The genesis and (ir)rationale of Arab anti-Semitism have been best elucidated by Bernard Lewis in his *Semites and Anti-Semites*. What is compelling in Yadlin's work is not its interpretive power; indeed, Yadlin skirts interpretation, preferring to let the texts speak for themselves. But the texts are this book's original contribution, since they emanate from within the only Arab country at formal peace with the Jewish state.

Two themes emerge from the mass of quotations collected by Yadlin. One is the contemporary use made of the anti-Jewish content of the Qurʾān. As Yadlin shows, the evocation of sacred text is not a method employed exclusively by Islamic fundamentalists. The story of Muḥammad's struggle against the Jews is part of the cultural repertoire of Egyptian society at every level, and constitutes a ready reservoir of proofs for the pernicious character of the Jews throughout history. Particularly compelling are the examples from the writings of Ḥasan Ḥanafī,

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* Rivka Yadlin. *An Arrogant Oppressive Spirit: Anti-Zionism as Anti-Judaism in Egypt*. Studies in Antisemitism. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989. Pp. x + 135.

theoretician of the so-called "Islamic left." Ḥanafī's graduate studies in philosophy at the Sorbonne did nothing to vary his mode of argumentation, which relies heavily on Qur'ānic indictments of the Jews.

The other theme is the transmission to Egypt of the modern anti-Semitic theories of the West. These sometimes appear in pure form, and sometimes are combined with the findings of western scholarship on ancient Egypt, to produce some remarkable readings of the past. One such reading was a book on the history and faith of the Jews, published in 1981 by the reputable publishing house Dār al-Hilāl. The author argues that the exploitative Jews had actively collaborated with the "imperialist" Hyksos in the second millennium BCE. The "national" regime that dislodged the Hyksos then punished the Jews by removing them from positions of influence. The Jews, sensing the decline of their power, fled from Egypt taking with them the Egyptians' belongings and assets. Thus was established the unalterable pattern of Jewish history, which the author traces through the millennia. This reading owes nothing to the Qur'ān, which accepts the moral judgments of the Book of Exodus and recognizes Moses as a prophet. It draws instead upon European Egyptology, European anti-Semitism, and European-inspired nationalism.

It should be stressed that nearly all of the quoted writings originated within the (legal) opposition, whose members are at the forefront of domestic resistance to the Egyptian-Israeli peace. Much of the opposition to the Egyptian regime is Islamic fundamentalist or Nasserist, and publications in both veins provide the bulk of Yadlin's materials. She concludes that "the foci of opposition and hostility to Jewish Israel in post-Peace Treaty Egypt, it has transpired, are not found in the masses, who have received Israeli visitors with warm hospitality; nor in the regime, which changed its policy, if not its perspective; but specifically in the ranks of the intellectuals." Nor are these intellectuals marginal. Many of the journals and publishing houses that have disseminated such material are prominent, even prestigious. As Yadlin notes, it is "the top echelon of Cairo's intellectual community [which] formulates and disseminates anti-Jewish views."

This is a controversial claim. Yadlin has pinpointed the Egyptian pens that spew most of the invective against the Jews and Israel. But in the absence of any comprehensive study of the Egyptian intelligentsia it is difficult to place many of Yadlin's writers in their specific contexts. Some are no more than publicists or journalists, and there are many publicists and journalists of equal stature whose writings are not similarly tainted. Furthermore, Egypt's most famous intellectuals—novelists, historians, professors, artists—do not figure in Yadlin's book. Certainly the next stage of research must be the placement of the authors of this material in their wider social and political contexts—a study that cannot be based on the texts alone.

In his foreword Yehuda Bauer writes that "there are no easy conclusions which can be drawn from books such as these." Israel's experience with Egypt exemplifies the vexing problem of interpretation. One might easily have concluded from Harkabi's earlier book that peace with Egypt was an impossibility. His book was

published, and the peace treaty was signed, in the same decade. And so Yadlin has not written a closed book. The future of the Egyptian-Israel peace, and the possibilities of further reconciliation between Jews and Arabs, will be affected by much more than the "textual anti-Semitism" documented in this book. But the measurement of Egypt's mood cannot exclude the systematic monitoring of the hate studied here.

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